

**SPECIAL SECTION:**

**Young Careers Researchers Present: Fresh Perspectives on the ‘New’ Career**

**PAPER 2**

**Hess, N., Jepsen, D., Dries, N. (2012). Career and employer change in the age of the ‘boundaryless’ career: The influence of career concerns and organisational commitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 81 (2), 280-288.**

### Abstract

This study examined the direct effect of individual career concerns on career and employer change intention, as well as the buffering influence of organisational commitment on this relationship, based on the AMO model of behavioural change intention. Survey data, collected from 341 employees across industry sectors in Australia, showed that ‘exploration’ concerns were positively related to both employer and career change intentions; the impact of exploration concerns on career change intention was buffered by affective commitment, however, and reinforced by normative commitment. ‘Establishment’ concerns were negatively related to career change intention, and this effect was also buffered by level of affective commitment. Our results point towards the distinct nature of employer and career change, and prompt calls for further research on the interplay of the myriad of factors that influence boundary-crossing career behaviour.

*Keywords.* New careers; Boundaryless careers; Career change; Employer change; Career concerns; Organisational commitment

## Career and Employer Change in the Age of the 'Boundaryless' Career: The Influence of Career Concerns and Organisational Commitment

Since the 1990s scholars and business commentators have advocated that organisational transformation is occurring on a global scale (Hall & Moss, 1998). In the careers field, theoretical development has shifted away from 'traditional' views of career as linear, predictable trajectories in favour of 'non-traditional' or 'new' views of career (e.g. Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009; Briscoe, Hall & DeMuth, 2006). These new career models, most notably the protean (Hall & Moss, 1998) and the boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), emphasise individual control over employability and skills development above and beyond organisational career management (Arnold & Cohen, 2007). One of the key distinctions of the boundaryless career framework is its emphasis on career agency across boundaries to secure employability. Recently, however, some critiques have suggested that studying the nature and consequences of career boundaries (occupational, organisational, geographical and work-life) is at least as important as studying boundarylessness (e.g. Rodrigues & Guest, 2010). As Walton and Mallon (2004) put it, "although the boundaries of career have shifted, they have not melted into thin air" (p. 77).

Boundaryless career literature tends to underestimate the factors that hinder or buffer boundary-crossing behaviour (Brown, 2002; Dries, 2011). In this paper we will focus on both *employer change*, or movement across organisational boundaries, as well as *career change*, or movement across occupational boundaries. We will examine the influences of an individual career actor's level of exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement career concerns (Super, 1980) on both career and employer change intention. Further to this direct effect, we argue that for specific career concerns to be translated into career change intentions, there needs to be a certain degree of self-perceived ability, motivation and opportunity (AMO) to make those changes (Boxall & Purcell, 2003; MacInnis & Jaworski,

1989) – conceptualised in the current paper by levels of affective, normative, and continuance commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

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### **Career Concerns and Change Intentions**

Although the contemporary literature on careers tends to depict early career development theory as focused on matching individuals to careers for life (Arnold & Cohen, 2007), as early as 1965, Lyon stated that the days of the ‘straight line’ career from youth until retirement were rapidly coming to an end. Super (1980) is commonly acknowledged as the first scholar to capture the cyclical nature of careers in a consistent theoretical model. Super’s (1980) Life-span, life-space theory describes how any given career actor’s self-concept is developed over time across four different career stages, each characterised by a specific set of concerns: (1) *exploration* concerns, which relate to the identification of interests and capabilities, and how these might fit with different types of careers; (2) *establishment* concerns, characterised by a preoccupation with settling down in the current career domain, and trying to establish a certain degree of security whilst balancing work with family concerns; (3) *maintenance* concerns, pertaining to consolidation of the current position, and maintaining one’s self-concept in an ever-evolving career environment; and (4) *disengagement* concerns, where the focus lies on workload reduction, changing career fields, or withdrawing from paid employment altogether (Smart, 1998; Super, 1957; Super, Thompson, & Lindeman, 1988).

Super (1980) went beyond the development of a linear career stage typology to include ‘mini-cycles’, which allow for interim re-evaluations and adjustments at any point in a full maxi-cycle spanning all four stages. For instance, upon establishing herself in a new job, a person may come to realize that the line of work does not suit her after all and return to exploration tactics (Glavin, 2004). Similar ideas are found in Hall (1993) and Hall and

Chandler (2009), who describe career cycles of two to five years. In these shorter career cycles, individuals are faced with rapid changes in technology, products, markets, or personal circumstances and have to reconcile different career concerns at a much faster pace, or even all at once. However, there have been three key gaps in the research to date.

First, the idea of ‘recycling’ through career concerns, however interesting, has rarely been the object of empirical research (Smart, 1998; Smart & Peterson, 1997). Second, most studies that have aimed to test some of the assumptions of life-span, life-space theory have relied mostly on chronological age and organisation, career, or position tenure as indicators of career stage (Allen & Meyer, 1993; Cohen, 1993; Pettit, Donohue, & De Cieri, 2004), which goes directly against Super’s idea of career stages being characterised by the level of exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement concerns (Bedeian, Pizzolatto, Long & Griffeth, 1991; Cooke, 1994; Ornstein, Cron & Slocum, 1989). Combined with the observation that nearly all ACCI studies have been cross-sectional (Cairo, Kritis & Myers, 1996), it is possible that this type of approach is measuring ‘types’ rather than ‘stages’ (Niles, Anderson, Hartung & Staton, 1999). Although recoding ACCI data into stages may be useful in a counselling setting where an individual’s scores are explored in-depth and synergistically (Glavin, 2004), in a research context this approach to simplifying ACCI data is likely to result in loss of data richness. Following Super’s notion of mini-cycles (1980) and Hall’s idea of ‘overlapping’ career learning cycles (1993), it would make much more sense to study respondents’ career concerns using continuous and non-disjoint data formats, whilst controlling for age and tenure indicators (Cairo, Kritis & Myers, 1996; Smart, 1998). By taking this approach in the current study, it is possible to separate ‘true’ career concern effects from effects caused by age or tenure.

Our hypotheses on the effects of levels of concern with exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement on employer change intention and career change intention

(the boundary-crossing behaviours of interest in the current study) are grounded in the scarce findings on change intentions reported in the literature on career concerns (i.e. Ornstein, Cron & Slocum., 1989; Smart & Peterson, 1997). Ornstein, Cron and Slocum (1989), in their survey study of 535 salespeople, found that intention to leave the organisation was higher when exploration concerns prevailed and lower when establishment, maintenance and disengagement concerns were high. Smart and Peterson (1997) found similar results in their survey study on career change intention. The current study seeks to extend these findings to determine the additional contribution of organisational commitment on an individual's career change intentions. The buffering effect of commitment on both employer and career change intentions may be best understood by considering the conceptual linkages between Allen and Meyer's (1990) three-component model of organisational commitment and the AMO model of behaviour (Boxall & Purcell, 2003; MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989).

### **Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity to Change**

Recent studies have raised the question of whether affective, normative and continuance commitments are part of the same construct (Solinger, van Olffen & Roe, 2008). Allen and Meyer (1990), in their original paper on the three-component model of commitment, offer the following definitions: "Employees with strong affective commitment remain because they *want* to, those with strong continuance commitment because they *need* to, and those with strong normative commitment because they feel they *ought* to" (p. 3). Solinger, van Olffen and Roe (2008) assert that this difference in focus implies that the three forms of commitment are qualitatively different concepts. Similarly, we argue that affective, normative, and continuance commitment are all components of organizational commitment, but that the dynamics behind their effects on employer and career change intentions are substantially different. Table 1 shows the connections between the three-component model of commitment and the ability-motivation-opportunity model of behaviour. High affective commitment and

high normative commitment are both associated with the *motivation* to change careers.

Continuance commitment, on the other hand, seems to relate more to the self-perceived *ability* and *opportunity* to make a career change.

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There are differences, too, with respect to the nature of the career change impacted by different forms of commitment. Affective and normative commitment both relate to a person's motivation to change employers or careers. Affective commitment refers to an individual's motivation to stay with their *current* employer and reflects the nature of their specific relationship. Normative commitment refers to an individual's motivation to stay with *any* employer, representing an individual's beliefs about the nature of the employer-employee relationship (Solinger, van Olffen & Roe, 2008). Normative commitment is reminiscent of Briscoe and colleagues (2006) measure of boundaryless career orientation, called 'organisational mobility preference' (see also Dries, Van Acker & Verbruggen, and Verbruggen, this issue). Continuance commitment reflects the attitude toward considering the objective or instrumental outcomes of either staying or leaving.

We suggest that through the mechanisms outlined above, each form of organisational commitment will act as a buffer between the different career concerns and change intentions. We suggest that higher commitment will lead to lower intentions to make a change at a given level of concern with exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). While previous studies have examined the moderating effect of career stage on the relationship between organisational commitment and change intentions (Allen & Meyer, 1993; Cohen, 1993; Pettit, Donohue, & De Cieri, 2004), we model commitment as a moderator, since the focus of this study lies with career concerns rather than with age or tenure differences. We suggest that the hypothesised dynamics will operate in the same way for employer and career change, since previous publications (e.g.

Sturges, Guest, Conway, & Mackenzie Davey, 2002; Weng, McElroy, Morrow, & Liu, 2010) have concluded that employer and career-related attitudes tend to converge due to their interconnected nature.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on our review of the literature, we formulate two central hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1.** Career concerns have a direct effect on employer and career change intentions.

**Hypothesis 2.** The impact of career concerns on employer and change intentions is mediated by organisational commitment.

Higher levels of exploration concerns are expected to result in higher levels of both employer and career change intentions, but we expect these (positive) effects to be buffered by organisational commitment. Higher levels of establishment, maintenance and disengagement concerns are expected to result in lower levels of employer and career change intentions; in addition, we expect these (negative) effects to be reinforced by the different forms of organisational commitment.

### **Method**

#### **Procedure and Sample**

The study was part of a larger Australian research project on ‘boundaryless’ careers and psychological contracts, with results of other parts of the study reported elsewhere (Hess & Jepsen, 2009). Following ethical approval, six hundred and sixty five employees from the insurance, finance, manufacturing and public sector were invited to complete an online survey about their careers. There were 341 responses, representing a response rate of 51%. Nine respondents were excluded because of missing data and a further 48 responses from temporary employees were excluded, 284 valid cases remained.



Respondents were aged from 18 to 62 ( $m = 37.66$ ,  $sd = 10.88$ ). Seventy-five per cent of respondents were female. Most (90%) were employed full-time, and had at least completed a university degree (51%). The sample included a variety of occupations, including administration (29%), management (16%), human resources (11%), sales and marketing (11%) and customer services (10%). Tenure was relatively evenly distributed, with 36% of respondents employed by their current organisation for one year or less, 39% employed for two to five years, while 9% had been employed by their current organisation for more than 10 years.

### Measures

**Career concerns.** Super, Thompson and Lindeman's (1988) Adult Career Concerns Inventory (ACCI) was used to assess respondents' levels of career concern with 60 career activities. For each of the exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement career concerns, respondents were asked to rate 15 career activities on a scale from 1 = No concern to 5 = Great concern. A sample exploration item is: "Finding a line of work that really interests me", a sample establishment item is "Making a place for myself where I work", a sample maintenance item is "Holding my own against the competition of new people entering the field", and a sample disengagement item is "Avoiding occupational pressures I formerly handled more easily". Coefficient alphas for all four career concerns were above .94.

**Organisational commitment.** Organisational commitment was measured using Allen and Meyer's (1990) three-component model with eight items each representing affective, normative and continuance commitment. Respondents were instructed to rate each of the 24 items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree. Sample items are: "This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me" (affective commitment), "I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organisation" (normative commitment), and "I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this

organisation” (continuance commitment). Coefficient alphas for all three commitment scales were above .73.

**Employer change intention.** Employer change intention was measured using three items adapted from Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997). Respondents were asked to rate each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree. A sample item is: “I am actively looking for a job outside this organisation”. The coefficient alpha for the scale was .85.

**Career change intention.** This last variable was measured using the career change intention item in the ACCI (Super, Thompson, & Lindeman, 1988): “After working in a field for a while, many persons shift to another job for any of a variety of reasons: pay, satisfaction, opportunity for growth, shut-down, etc. When the shift is a change in field, not just working for another employer in the same field, it is commonly called a ‘career change’. Following are five statements which represent various stages in career change. Choose the one statement that best describes your current status”. Respondents were instructed to rate their career change intention on a 5-point scale from 1 = I am not at all considering making a career change to 5 = I am in the process of effecting a career change. Level of career change Intention was calculated directly from this rating.

## **Analyses**

Two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted. In step 1, age, organisation tenure and career tenure were controlled for as these variables have repeatedly been demonstrated to impact on career concerns, organisational commitment and employer and career change intentions (Allen & Meyer, 1993; Bedeian *et al.*, 1991; Cohen, 1993; Cooke, 1994; Pettit, Donohue, & De Cieri, 2004). Controlling for age and tenure allows conclusions on the effects of career concerns on change intentions at any point in a person’s life and (organisational) career. Position tenure was not included as a control variable due to

multicollinearity (see Table 2). To test hypothesis 1, level of concern with exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement, as well as the three forms of commitment were entered at Step 2. To test hypothesis 2, the two-way interaction among the four career concerns and three types of commitment were entered at Step 3.

### Results

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations and correlations between the study variables, which were all consistent with expectations. Cronbach alpha coefficients are given on the diagonal. Table 3 shows the beta coefficients, standard errors, and effect sizes ( $R^2$ ) for each step of the two hierarchical regressions. For the employer change intention model, the results of the hierarchical multiple regression show that the control variables demonstrated a significant effect on employer change intention ( $R^2 = .03$ ;  $F = 2.86$ ,  $p < .05$ ), primarily as a result of organisation tenure ( $\beta = -.03$ ,  $p < .05$ ). For the career change intention model, entering the control variables also had a significant effect on intention to change career ( $R^2 = .10$ ;  $F = 10.58$ ,  $p < .01$ ), primarily as a result of the effect of organisation tenure ( $\beta = -.04$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and gender ( $\beta = -.06$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

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In support of hypothesis 1, higher exploration concerns were found to be associated with higher levels of employer change intention ( $\beta = .55$ ,  $p < .01$ ) as well as higher levels of career change intention ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ), whilst higher establishment concerns led to lower career change intention ( $\beta = -.34$ ,  $p < .01$ ). None of the other career concerns were significant predictors of employer or career change intention. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was only partially supported.

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Hypothesis 2 was not supported by the employer change intention model and partially supported by the career change intention model. Although both higher affective commitment ( $\beta = -.60, p < .01$ ) and continuance commitment ( $\beta = -.32, p < .01$ ) led to lower employer change intentions in Step 2, at Step 3 when the interaction variables were entered, there was no significant change to the model and no significant interaction effects. However, for career change intention, the results of Step 3 showed that entering the two-way interactions added significantly to the model ( $R^2 = .21; F = 3.02, p < .01$ ) and there were four significant interactions.

In support of hypothesis 2, the significant interaction of exploration concern with affective commitment ( $\beta = -.34, p < .05$ ) showed that when individuals have both high affective commitment and high exploration concerns they demonstrate the same (intermediate) level of career change intention as when exploration concerns were low. Furthermore, consistent with hypothesis 2, the significant interaction of establishment concern with affective commitment ( $\beta = .28, p < .05$ ) showed that individuals with high affective commitment showed similar (intermediate) career change intention as when establishment concerns were high.

In contrast to hypothesis 2, however, the significant interaction of exploration with normative commitment ( $\beta = .35, p < .05$ ), showed that high exploration career concern led to higher career change intention, but only when normative commitment was high. Under conditions of low normative commitment, career change intention was slightly lower in people with high exploration concerns than in those with lower exploration concerns. Also contradictory to hypothesis 2, the significant interaction of disengagement career concern with normative commitment ( $\beta = -.34, p < .01$ ) showed an opposite relationship for those with high and low normative commitment. Those with high normative commitment showed a *decrease* in intention to make a career change as level of disengagement concern increases,

whilst those with low normative commitment showed an *increase* in intention to make a career change as level of disengagement concern increases.

### **Discussion**

The results of this study highlight the need to further advance our understanding of the influence of the different factors that provoke and buffer boundary-crossing behaviour (Brown, 2002; Dries, 2011).

### **Key Findings**

We found a direct effect of level of exploration concerns on both employer and career change intentions, as well as a direct effect of establishment concerns on career change intentions. The influence of career concerns rather than career stages was used so that ‘true’ career concern effects on career and employer change intentions could be discerned (Bedeian *et al.*, 1991; Cooke, 1994; Ornstein, Cron & Slocum, 1989). All four career concerns were found to correlate positively with each other, which confirms our assertion that this is not an ‘either-or’ story – and that considering all four concerns simultaneously (in a continuous data format) is a valid approach. We then went beyond this direct effect, to examine the effect of level of affective, normative, and continuance commitment on the relationship between career concerns and employer and career change intention. The use of the three-component model of organisational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1993) enabled discrimination between the different types of organisational commitment and allowed deductions in line with the AMO framework of behavioural intention (Boselie, Paauwe, & Jansen, 2001; Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute, 2011; Siemsen, Roth, & Balasubramanian, 2008). We found that both affective and normative commitment impacted the effects of exploration concerns and disengagement concerns on career change intentions, but not employer change intentions, suggesting a distinction in the decision making processes towards crossing employer versus career boundaries (see also Chudzikowski, this issue).

Hypothesis 1 investigated the direct effects of each of the four types of career concerns on the two outcomes of employer change and career change. As hypothesised, individuals high in exploration concerns were more likely to report higher organisational and career change intentions (Ornstein Cron & Slocum, 1989; Smart & Peterson, 1997). These results are consistent with Super's (1980) life-span, life-space theory of career development and boundaryless career theory (Hall & Moss, 1998; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Individuals looking to develop their skills and experience, i.e. those with high exploration concerns, are likely to look for opportunities to meet these concerns, regardless of the boundaries they have to cross to do so. This strong effect of exploration concerns on employer change intentions confirms other studies that have emphasized the fragile nature of early employment relationships (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000). An alternate explanation for this result is that respondents' organizations were not providing sufficient (or the right) career development opportunities to support their career concerns (Sturges, Guest, Conway, & Mackenzie Davey, 2002; Weng, McElroy, Morrow, & Liu, 2010). This result calls for all organisations (or at least, those that are keen to retain their employees) to pay increased attention to socialisation and other processes that might encourage employees to enact their exploration concerns internally. Surprisingly, establishment, maintenance and disengagement concerns had no significant effect on intention to leave employer, suggesting that employees in these stages feel neutral towards staying or leaving.

Hypothesis 2 investigated the impact of organisational commitment on the relationship between each of the four types of career concerns and the two outcomes of employer change and career change. No significant effect was found for employer change intention, level of affective commitment, normative commitment or continuance commitment; none showed an impact on individuals' intentions to act on their concerns for making an employer change. However, affective commitment and normative commitment did have an impact on career

change intention, which suggests that employees do discriminate between these two types of boundary-crossing career behaviour.

The above results demonstrate that when exploration concerns are high, career change intentions are also high. However, when individuals had both high affective commitment and high exploration concerns they demonstrated the same (intermediate) level of career change intention as when exploration concerns were low. Therefore, for those with high exploration concerns, career change intention was most pronounced in situations where affective commitment was low. A similar pattern of results was also found for establishment concerns, with individuals with high affective commitment showing similar (intermediate) career change intention as when establishment concerns are high. Both these findings suggest that affective commitment is buffering the influence of exploration and establishment career concerns on career change intention. These results can be explained by the AMO model of behavioural intentions (Boxall & Purcell, 2003). Under circumstances where individuals feel motivated to stay with their current employer based on an emotional attachment, i.e. affective commitment, regardless of their level of concern with exploring their career options or establishing their career, they are more likely to stay within their current career field.

Interestingly, those high in normative commitment and high in exploration concerns showed completely different pattern of intentions. Rather than buffering the influence of exploration concerns on career change intention, level of normative commitment appeared to reinforce the relationship – which supports Solinger, van Offlen, and Roe's (2008) argument that affective commitment and normative commitment are completely different constructs. Under conditions of low normative commitment, career change intention was slightly lower in people with high exploration concerns than in those with lower exploration concerns. Normative commitment appears not to buffer the relationship between exploration concern and career change intention, but rather reinforce it. In fact, people high in exploration

concerns and high in normative commitment showed the highest career change intentions, perhaps suggesting that these individuals want to make an internal career change within their current organization. Alternatively, perhaps these individuals see their current career as ‘transitory’. Because these individuals are concerned with developing high commitment to their organizations, it is specifically important for them to find a strong ‘match’ in terms of career – hence, they might be more selective in their career choices than others so as to ensure that they find their perfect match (Briscoe, Hall, DeMuth, 2006).

However, normative commitment appears to have an opposite effect for those with disengagement concerns than those with exploration concerns. Those low in normative commitment and with high disengagement concerns were more likely to intend to change careers than those high in normative commitment and with high disengagement concerns. This follows our prediction that those with high disengagement concerns would have higher career change intentions except under conditions of high normative commitment, i.e. when motivation to stay with any employer is high, and that level of normative commitment would buffer the relationship. Those with high disengagement concerns are focused on workload reduction or changing career field (Smart, 1998; Super, 1957; Super, Thompson, & Lindeman, 1988), and this focus on career change was most pronounced when motivation to stay with any employer was low. However, continuance commitment had no influence on the effect of career concerns on career change intention, suggesting that motivation, rather than ability and opportunity is directing career change behaviour based on level of career concerns.

### **Limitations**

The study faced a number of limitations. First of all, it was a cross-sectional study conducted at a single point in time. A longitudinal design would have allowed more confidence in interpreting the results. Second, the self-report nature of the survey, while



consistent with similar studies, runs the risk that common method variance may have influenced some outcomes. While a generalised sample in a variety of occupational groups was used, validation of these results is important. It is possible that alternative models including additional variables not available in the current data set would be better able to explain the processes underlying our findings. Furthermore, the current paper investigated level of career change intention based on a single item based on stage of career change. Further research is needed to understand how and why individuals move through these different stages of career change, and which model of career change is most reflective of the underlying processes.

### **Implications for Research and Practice**

This paper emphasised again the importance of supporting employees' career development activities, particularly when they are most concerned with exploration activities (Sturges, Guest, Conway, & Mackenzie Davey, 2002; Weng, McElroy, Morrow, & Liu, 2010). Organisations looking to retain their employees should devote special attention to supporting those individuals in their exploration activities, so as to engage them within the organisation. From an academic perspective, this study contributes to existing knowledge not just because of the simultaneous use of all four career concerns (Bedeian *et al.*, 1991; Cooke, 1994; Ornstein, Cron & Slocum, 1989), but also by its inclusion of a multidimensional organisational commitment measure, allowing us to demonstrate the differential effects of the different forms of commitment (Solinger, van Olffen & Roe, 2008).

There remains an urgent need for more longitudinal studies, however, if we want to talk about 'evolutions through stages', and how the recycling between career concerns plays out in reality (Smart, 1998). The current paper also has important implications for career development practitioners supporting individuals navigating career development. It is evident from the means of the exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement career

concern scores that similar levels of all four career concerns are held by these respondents. Career counsellors who use Super's (1980) model to guide their counselling might be encouraged to not quickly categorise a client on the basis of their organisational or career tenure.

Furthermore, as this paper found, emotional attachment to the organisation buffered the influence of exploration concerns on changing occupation. Career counsellors should be encouraged to explore both the key concerns that are influencing behaviour in the individual, whilst also not discounting the influence than an individual's attachment to an organisation has on them acting out their career concerns. It would be important for both industry bodies and organisations to effectively manage the expectations of new entrants to the occupation to help build these attachments to their employing organisation, especially considering the increased importance of reducing skills shortages in a range of professions (DEST, 2002). We suggest that this attachment to organisations could be the safeguard that is operating for individual career agents crossing occupational boundaries.

### **Conclusion**

This paper looked to disentangle the constraints and factors that influence career and employer mobility (Ng & Feldman, 2007). Change across organisational and career boundaries is a complex phenomenon, which cannot easily be explained by a single predictor. The current paper identified the influence of both individual and organisational factors on crossing of these boundaries. Higher levels of emotional attachment, indeed, reduced the likelihood of an individual's intentions to act on his or her exploration concerns (Ng & Feldman, 2007). However, this does not necessarily imply a negative outcome for the individual. Rather, exploring these concerns *within* the boundaries of an organisation might offer an opportunity to 'try them out' in the context of a relatively secure environment that supports career growth and development (Weng, McElroy, Morrow, & Liu, 2010; Sturges,

Guest, Conway, & Mackenzie Davey, 2002). Our findings highlight the need to further examine the factors that influence people's boundary-crossing intentions, whilst also emphasising the importance of withholding judgement as to whether boundary-crossing behaviour is inherently positive or negative.

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Table 1.

*Associations of the Three Types of Organisational Commitment with the Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity (AMO) to Initiate an Employer and/or Career Change*

	Ability to change	Motivation to change	Opportunity to change
High affective commitment	--	Low motivation to change employer/career	--
High normative commitment	--	Low motivation to change employer/career	--
High continuance commitment	Low (self-perceived) ability to find adequate employment elsewhere/in another field	--	Little (self-perceived) opportunity to find adequate employment elsewhere/in another field

*Note.* -- means “cannot say”.



Table 2.

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Correlations for the Study Variables (n = 284)*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	37.57	10.82	-							
2. Organisation tenure	3.76	4.33	.40**	-						
3. Career tenure	8.50	7.77	.58**	.36**	-					
4. Position tenure	2.37	2.95	.35**	.75**	.42**	-				
5. Exploration concerns	3.21	1.08	-.27**	-.26**	-.19**	-.19**	(.97)			
6. Establishment concerns	3.38	.97	-.19**	-.24**	-.13*	-.20**	.72**	(.96)		
7. Maintenance concerns	3.28	.90	-.17**	-.17**	-.12*	-.13*	.63**	.82**	(.96)	
8. Disengagement concerns	2.92	.95	.28**	.08	.24**	.07	.33**	.41**	.51**	(.94)
9. Affective commitment	4.35	1.18	.14*	.11	.11	.11	-.27**	-.06	-.01	.02
10. Normative commitment	3.73	.89	.12*	.11	.10	.11	-.05	.06	.07	.13*
11. Continuance commitment	4.11	1.25	.04	.18**	.08	.21**	.04	.00	-.05	.07
12. Employer change intention	3.44	1.74	-.21**	-.13*	-.14*	-.12*	.35**	.17**	.12*	.00
13. Career change intention	2.29	1.36	-.14*	-.25**	-.27**	-.26**	.15*	.06	.05	-

*Notes.* Cronbach's alphas are added on the main diagonal where applicable; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 2.

*Continued*

Variable	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age					
2. Organisation tenure					
3. Career tenure					
4. Position tenure					
5. Exploration concerns					
6. Establishment concerns					
7. Maintenance concerns					
8. Disengagement concerns					
9. Affective commitment	(.83)				
10. Normative commitment	.37**	(.73)			
11. Continuance commitment	.05	.20**	(.81)		
12. Employer change intention	-.49**	-.18**	-.23**	(.85)	
13. Career change intention	-.10	-.07	-.11	.20**	-

*Notes.* Cronbach's alphas are added on the main diagonal where applicable; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 3.

*Results of the Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses (n = 284)*

	Change intentions							
	Employer change intention				Career change intention			
	Model		Coefficients		Model		Coefficients	
	R <sup>2</sup> (F)	Δ R <sup>2</sup> (Δ F)	β	SE	R <sup>2</sup> (F)	Δ R <sup>2</sup> (Δ F)	β	SE
<b>Step 1.</b>	.03	.03			.10	.10		
<i>Intercept</i>	(2.86*)	(2.86*)	3.69**	.17	(10.58**)	(10.58**)	2.77**	.13
Gender			-.03	.03			-.06**	.02
Organisation tenure			-.03*	.01			-.04**	.01
Career tenure			.28	.24			.18	.18
<b>Step 2.</b>	.34	.31			.12	.02		
<i>Intercept</i>	(14.04**)	(18.29**)	3.38**	.15	(3.62**)	(.68)	2.73**	.14
Gender			.02	.02			-.05**	.02
Organisation tenure			-.01	.01			-.04**	.01
Career tenure			.25	.21			.20	.19
Exploration concerns			.55**	.13			.19	.12

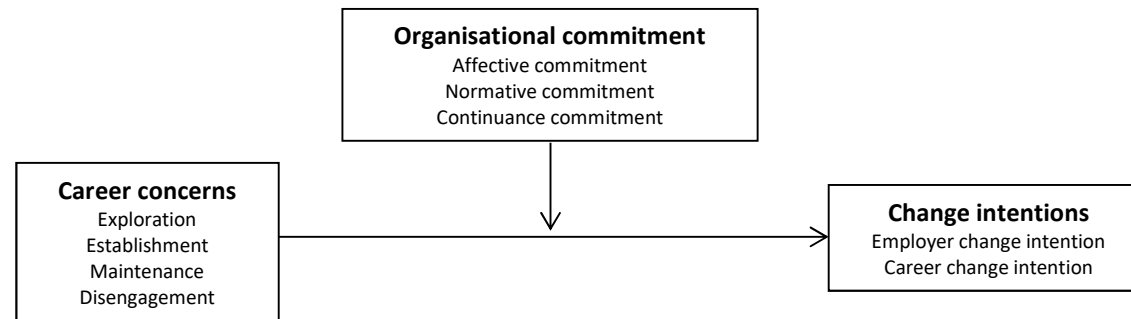
Establishment concerns	-.07	.18	-.14	.16
Maintenance concerns	-.11	.18	-.03	.17
Disengagement concerns	-.08	.11	.03	.10
Affective commitment	-.60**	.08	-.02	.08
Normative commitment	.09	.11	.01	.10
Continuance commitment	-.32**	.07	-.08	.07

Step 3.	.36	.02			.21	.09		
Intercept	(6.60**)	(.60)	3.40**	.16	(3.02**)	(2.34**)	2.68**	.14
Gender			.02	.02			-.04*	.02
Organisation tenure			-.01	.01			-.03**	.01
Career tenure			.20	.21			.15	.19
Exploration concerns			.59**	.14			.27*	.12
Establishment concerns			-.02	.19			-.34*	.17
Maintenance concerns			-.17	.20			.16	.18
Disengagement concerns			-.09	.12			-.02	.11
Affective commitment			-.59**	.09			-.09	.08
Normative commitment			.07	.12			.06	.10
Continuance commitment			-.31**	.08			-.09	.07
Exploration concerns *Affective commitment			-.02	.13			-.22*	.11

Exploration concerns *Normative commitment	.18	.19	.35*	.16
Exploration concerns*Continuance commitment	.05	.12	.15	.11
Establishment concerns *Affective commitment	-.23	.17	.28*	.15
Establishment concerns * Normative commitment	-.04	.21	-.10	.18
Establishment concerns* Continuance commitment	-.10	.16	-.10	.14
Maintenance concerns *Affective commitment	.24	.15	-.15	.13
Maintenance concerns * Normative commitment	-.09	.22	.17	.19
Maintenance concerns* Continuance commitment	.01	.19	-.00	.16
Disengagement concerns *Affective commitment	-.02	.10	.08	.09
Disengagement concerns * Normative commitment	-.05	.14	-.34**	.12
Disengagement concerns* Continuance commitment	.05	.10	-.09	.09

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*Notes.* All variables were centered prior to being entered into the regression model; Gender: men = 1, women = 0; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .



*Figure 1.* Research model.